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ABSTRACT

Humanistic geography is similar to ethnography in that both are concerned with describing actions and events in terms of their meaning to those experiencing them; humanistic geography is particularly concerned with understanding subjective social space: space as perceived by members of particular human groups. A humanistic geography case study, describing two taxonomical structures of spatial activity, basketball and "staying places," is derived from field work using ethnographic methods in a Yavapai reservation community near Phoenix. The recreation area in the community includes a basketball court which serves as the central element of social space for Yavapai youth, as activity there involves much more than basketball; the court is the focal point of information about activities, spatial movement of people, and overall community awareness. "Staying places," a concept alien to Anglo culture, describes a wide range of options for an individual's place of residence, not necessarily his "home," and may include places on-reservation, on other reservations, or in non-Indian communities. Ethnographic analysis of an individual's "staying places" and reasons for moving between them reveals an associational network in which individuals can exhibit considerable spatial mobility while maintaining a cultural and community sense of stability. (MH)

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ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION AS A TOOL IN HUMANISTIC GEOGRAPHY: A NATIVE AMERICAN CASE STUDY

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THE ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW AS A TOOL IN HUMANISTIC GEOGRAPHY: A NATIVE AMERICAN CASE STUDY by Dick G. Winchell, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85281.

Humanistic geography has received criticism for the lack of well-developed methodologies. The ethnographic interview, used extensively in anthropology, provides a powerful tool for geographers concerned with understanding the everyday reality of human behavior. The ethnographic interview examines the meaning of actions and events as understood by the subjects and defines spatial and social behavior in its existential context. This paper uses the ethnographic interview to study a small group of Native American youth and demonstrates the applicability of the technique in meeting the requirements of methodology within the framework of humanistic geography.

ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION AS A TOOL IN HUMANISTIC GEOGRAPHY: A NATIVE AMERICAN CASE STUDY

Dick G. Winchell

Two themes are critical for creating this paper: first, the significance of humanistic geography and other non-positivist based research within the discipline; and second, the application of ethnographic description to contemporary groups and subcultures in urban anthropology. Both themes reflect new paradigms within their respective disciplines, part of a larger trend in literature and social science to recognize the limitations of the scientific method.

Relph describes the purpose of humanistic geography as:

1) to describe the phenomenon of immediate experience as understood by those experiencing it;

2) to recognize the complexity and variety of the phenomena; and

3) to examine ways in which these constitute themselves.

(Relph, 1976, 5-6)

Particularly in our efforts to understand the experience of space, he suggests we "suspend belief in existing explanations and accounts and even in our own biases, and attempt to put ourselves in the position of those experiencing the phenomenon (IBID.). This is very similar to the purpose of ethnography, which Spradley describes as "...the concern with the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand (Spradley, 1979, 5). This commonality of purpose indicates the strong potential interface of the two sub-disciplines, sharing a common literature toward understanding human behavior.

Methodological Problems within Geography

Social geography in recent years has formed two distinct, and sometimes opposing, components or paradigms. These paradigms are based upon philosophical rather than methodological issues, yet the 'appropriateness', meaning or relevance of methodologies whithin each paradigm has been the battleground between the two. Harvey, in Explanation in Geography (1969) clearly identified the issue of philosophical assumptions inherent in a positivist approach. His response was to ignore these philosophical issues in that work, adopting the dominant paradigm and the explanation mode of research. Harvey's subsequent works became the foundations for non-positivist geography, reconsidering these philosophical issues. During the 1970's, social geography became divided into followers of logical positivist philosophy, and those of a range of non-positivist philosophies including humanistic geographers, linguistic geographers, and Marxist geographers (see Figure 1).

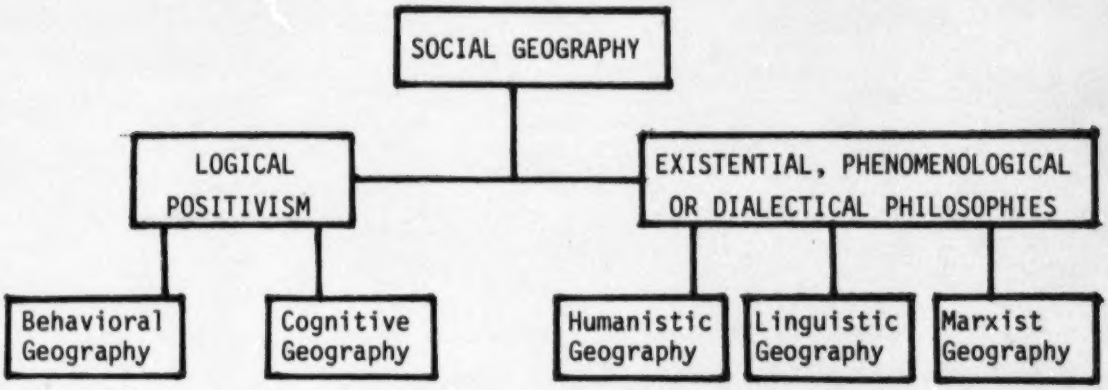
Logical positivism, utilizing the scientific method of research, is based upon two assumptions:

1) that objective or unbiased research can be conducted upon human subjects; and

2) that individual behavior or activities within a given area can be aggregated and analyzed with statistical tests and models in a manner similar to atomic structures within the physical sciences.

Non-positivist philosophies challenge these assumptions, argueing that social research cannot be objective, since it always exists within a cultural and political context which creates implicit if not explicit bias. Furthermore, any attempt to aggregate individual data into generalization fails to relate to the cultural meaning of the activity. These arguements

FIGURE 1: SUB-DISCIPLINES OF SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY



Sources: Seamon, David, "Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets, in Buttimer, Anne and David Seamon, eds., The Humanistic Experience of Space and Place, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1980.

Smith, Christopher, "Epistemological Problems in Planning," Antipode, V. 4, # 1, February, 1972.

against positivism do not challenge the meaning of such research, but rather point out the limitations. Spradley indicates this dilemma by stating:

> Survey research has many values and it generates important information. It even results in descriptions of people, but not in cultural descriptions. (IBID. 32)

A comparison of the purposes of methodologies utilized under each paradigm is shown in Figure 2 Contrasting Philosophical Approaches to Human Subjects. In the positivist approach, the researcher provides the framework or matrix of analysis which creates and evaluates data, while the non-positivist approach utilizes the knowledge and meaning of human activity of the subject or informant to create and understand activity.

The differences are further confounded by antithetical approaches to the research process. Figure 3 shows the linear structure of the positivist approach to research, inherent in the cultural assumptions of science and society, while Figure 4 represents an entirely different, non-linear structure for ethnographic research. Rather than entering the field with pre-formulated hypotheses, the ethnographer or non-positivist researcher begins by collecting and organizing the data, before establishing hypotheses to be tested. Such divergent perspectives may have led Entrikin to suggest humanistic geography "...lack(s) a clearly defined methodology" (1976, 625), but ignores major advances in qualitative research such as Glaser and Strauss's work, The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research (1967). The advent of qualitative research to geography has been rather slow to evolve, perhaps due to lack of interface with ethnographers and ethnomethodologists in the other social science disciplines.

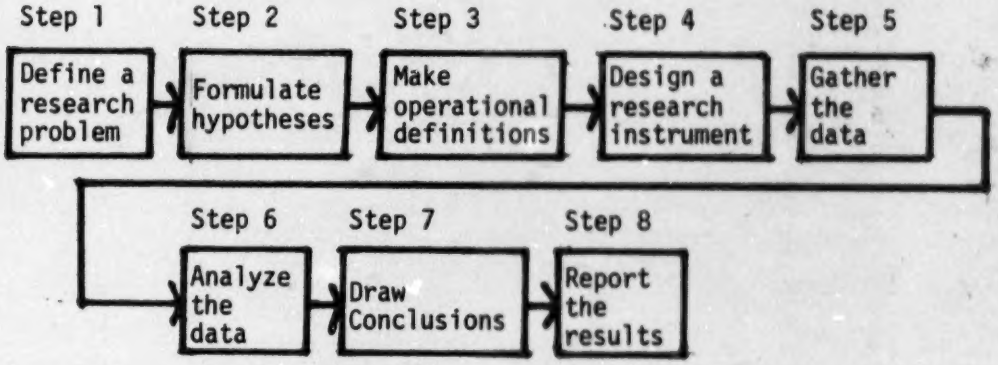
Humanistic geography is concerned with qualitative as well as

FIGURE 2: CONTRASTING PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES TO HUMAN SUBJECTS

Logical Positivist	Non-Positivist
Research with Subjects	Research with Informants
1. What do I know about a problem that will allow me to formulate and test a hypothesis?	1. What do my informants know about their culture that I can discover?
2. What concepts can I use to test this hypothesis?	2. What concepts do my informants use to classify their experience?
3. How can I operationally define these concepts?	3. How do my informants define these concepts?
4. What scientific theory can explain the data?	4. What folk theory do my informants use to explain their experience?
5. How can I interpret the results and report them in the language of my colleagues?	5. How can I translate the cultural knowledge of my informants into a cultural description my colleagues will understand?

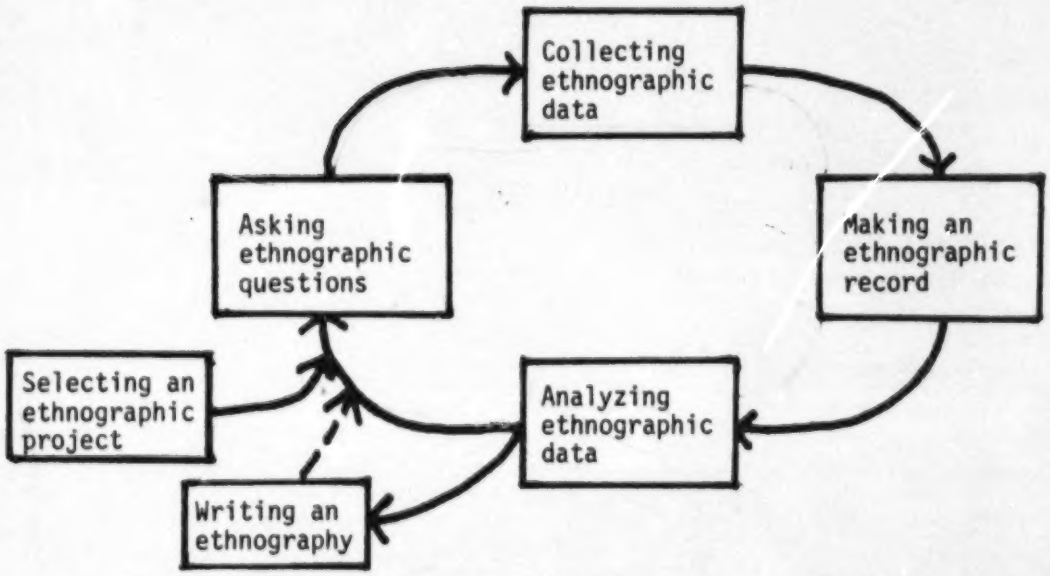
Source: Spradley, James P., The Ethnographic Interview, N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979, p. 30.

FIGURE 3: LINEAR SEQUENCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH (POSITIVIST)



Source: Spradley, James P., Participant Observation, N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980, 27.

FIGURE 4: THE ETHNOGRA[illegible]RESEA[illegible]CH CYCLE (NON-POSITIVIST)



Source: Spradley, James P., Participant Observation, 1980, 29.

quantitative reseach, evolving from the French concern with both "objective social space, defined as the spatial framework in which groups live..." and "...subjective social space, defined as 'space as perceived by members of particular human groups.'" (Chombart de Lauwe in Buttimer, 1969, 420)

Introduction to the Literature of Ethnography

Central to any ethnographic research is field work, in which the researcher enters an alien cultural system. Rather than applying positivist methodologies which assume the researcher is unbiased, ethnographic research has always assumed that the researcher is biased, and has developed techniques to minimize that cultural bias. Ethnographic literature for over a century has established methodological approaches which are "appropriate" to native cultures, attempting to understand actions and meanings within those cultural constructs rather than through scientific data collection and analysis, the point humanistic geography has now reached. Rather than reinventing a totally new structure for geographic methodologies, geographers would be wise to draw upon this large body of literature, particularly when much of its content focuses upon spatial interaction. Within such a context geographers can and should be making major contributions to social science advances.

Malinowsky states the the purpose of ethnography is: "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, his version of his world."(1922, 25). Spradley suggests:

> Field work, then, involves the disciplined study of what the world is like to people who have learned to see, hear, speak, think and act in ways that are different. Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people. (Spradley, 1979, 4)

Spradley goes on to state that the core of ethnography is "concern with the meaning of actions and

> The essential core of ethnography is this concern with the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand. Some of these meanings are directly expressed in language; many are taken for granted and communicated only indirectly through word and action. But in every society people make constant use of these complex meaning systems to organize their behavior, to understand themselves and others, and to make sense out of the world in which they live. These systems of meaning

> constitute their culture: ethnography always implies a theory of culture. (Spradley, 1979, 5)

Culture in this usage is defined as "the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior" (IBID.). Many sociologists and anthropologists have recognized the importance of symbols and symbolic action in the meanings or interpretation of behavior (IBID.,6). This system, termed symbolic interactionism, has three premises:

1) that people take action based upon the meanings of actions and things have for them;

2) that the meanings of actions and things come from social interaction with other people;

3) that meanings are understood and changed through an interpretive process of the person in dealing with the action or things he encounters. (Blumer, 1969, 2 and Apradley, 1979, 6)

Thus, symbolic interactionism addresses the second problem of positivism, that of aggregation, by stating that data and aggregation of data has little significance outside the "meanings" or symbolic interaction within which behavior occurs. Ethnographic research, therefore, presents a methodology which is centered upon the culture or subjective social space of actors.

A Native American Case Study

The best way to learn any methodological technique is simply to do it, carrying out the methods in a field setting. In this case, ethnographic description is a two-phased process, comprised of the ethnographic interview and participant observation. The first process is concerned with the meanings and actions of people as they describe them, as reflected particularly in their language system. The second makes inferences from what people do, based upon observation of activities. Spradley describes each process as separate approaches to the Developmental Research Sequence (DRS) Method, shown in Figure 5. Both texts listed are excellent introductions to the topic, particularly for students who wish to apply their methods.

In my own case, I applied general ethnographic techniques in field work over the past seven years in a Native American reservation community located near the Phoenix metropolitan area. This community of 315 residents, comprising 25,000 acres of land, is the setting for the "case study." In the time remaining I will briefly describe two taxonomical structures of spatial activity, one dealing with a specific activity--basketball; and the other dealing with "staying places", a concept alien to Anglo culture.

FIGURE 5: DEVELOPMENTAL RESEARCH SEQUENCE (DRS) METHODOLOGY

Ethnographic Interview	Participant Observation
1. Locating an Informant	1. Ethnography and Culture
2. Interviewing and Informant	2. Doing Participant Observation
3. Making and Ethnographic Record	3. Making an Ethnographic Record
4. Asking Descriptive Questions	4. Making Descriptive Observations
5. Analyzing Ethnographic Interviews	5. Making a Domain Analysis
6. Making a Domain Analysis	6. Making Focused Observations
7. Asking Structural Questions	7. Making a Taxonomic Analysis
8. Making a Taxonomic Analysis	8. Making Selected Observations
9. Asking Contrast Questions	9. Making a Componential Analysis
10. Making a Componential Analysis	10. Discovering Cultural Themes
11. Discovering Cultural Themes	11. Taking a Cultural Inventory
12. Writing an Ethnography	12. Writing an Ethnography

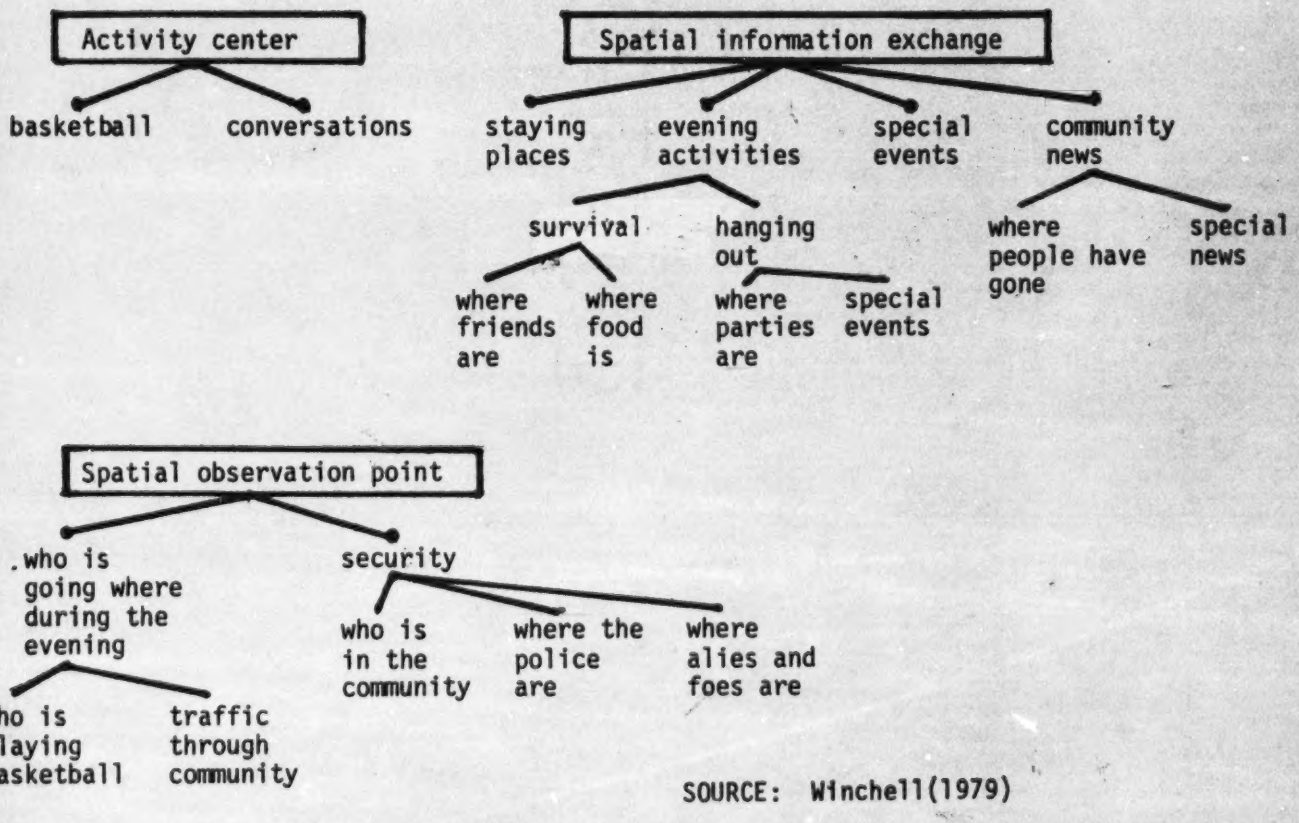
Sources: Spradley, James P., The Ethnographic Interview, 1979, and Participant Observation, 1980.

Basketball and Spatial Information

If there is one central element of the social space of Yavapai youth, it is the recreation area in the center of the community, which includes a basketball court, softball field and other recreational facilities. This discussion will describe the activities around that court from 1975 to 1980, when a new gymnasium complex was completed. I soon learned that much more went on at the court than basketball--that this activity became the focal point of information about activities, spatial movement of people, and overall community cultural awareness. Figure 6 indicates the functional activities--activity center, spatial information exchange, and spatial observation point--which the basketball court facilitated.

Playing basketball on the court is, of course, the initial purpose one would identify as important for the young people. Both men and women participated, enacting a controlled informal system of allowing all community members to play. Over the course of an evening, the younger players would show up first, girls playing at one basket, with the boys playing at the other. Over time, older youth would arrive, and younger players would simply fade away into the night or onto the sidelines to talk, play, and watch the games. Formal teams were organized for all age groups, for both men and women, and tournament games were played throughout the State in Indian competition or regular play in Indian leagues. Team practice would have priority over regular play, and coaches, usually older community members, were obligated to provide transportation, uniforms and equipment as well as coaching services. Playing basketball, either games of 21 or team play, plus the conversations during and around the game represent a simple picture of the activity.

FIGURE 6: FUNCTIONAL TAXONOMY OF THE USES OF SPATIAL INFORMATION WHILE PLAYING BASKETBALL



SOURCE: Winchell(1979)

As suggested, however, players of different ages would generally be "accepted" onto the court at certain times. It became important for players to be able to view the court, identify who is playing, and judge when they should move over to the court from their house or play. Access to the court is generally by foot, bicycle, or in some cases, by car. In a subject group of 22 youth from age 18 to 35, only one owned a car, but most had access to a vehicle if they had gas money. For these youth, it was important to arrive at the court around 9:00 p.m., find out what was going on--spatial information related to staying places (where other community members were residing), evening activities, which could give meaning for survival, in terms of locating food or friends; or for "hanging out", which meant finding who had money within the community, who was sponsoring a party or special activity, and where it was being held. A tremendous amount of spatial information was collected, exchanged, and interpreted by each participant in the basketball activity. Groups of two or three players would come and go over the evening, exchanging information and exploiting community resources. For example:

Bill: "Look at this!" pulling something from under his coat.

Delbert: "What is it?"

Bill: "A six-pack. I just put it under my shirt. Everybody at my house was really partying. Nobody even noticed."

Delbert: "Let's go get high."

Both depart in the darkness to finish the six pack. Because they are aged 10 and 12, respectively, they will drink fast so the police don't catch them. Later they return to the court, but do not play basketball.

Special events and community news are also exchanged. Almost every evening, some event or activity takes place, at least on a small scale, and

becomes common knowledge on the basketball court. What may start out as one person who got paid that day, going into town to get groceries could end with ten or twenty young people and other community members (older and younger) participating in eating, drinking, or some other special event.

Another function of the court is as a spatial observation point, both for people to be observed under the lights of the court, and passing by from time to time so people know they are "around"; or by the players who watch traffic on the road, to gain information about the movement of community members, and other people traveling the road. Sometimes while in the middle of a game someone would say: "There goes Jimmy down the road," or "Robert must be going to get groceries." Some minutes later I would see a car drive by the court on the way to the store. I soon learned that there were vistas between trees and houses which gave access to the roads through the community. By watching these vistas even during the game, spatial knowledge of community activities could be maintained. Other information regarding security--who is traveling through the community, where the police are, particularly if a party is going on; and where friends and foes are in case problems arise, are important information features.

The basketball court is a central activity feature of the social space of Yavapai youth, not simply from an activity standpoint, but from a spatial information and community awareness standpoint. The maintenance and funtioning of such spatial information networks is a critical feature of the community, group and cultural identity or the members. Through spatial activity, and its interpretation within the exchange mechanisms, Yavapai culture becomes manifest.

Staying Places of Yavapai Youth

Over a brief time I realized that few of the young people on the basketball courts responded to my questions about "Where do you live?" Finally, when one of the players joined the game, someone asked him:

"Hey Jerry, Where are you staying now?"

"Oh, over at my grandmother's."

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah, my old man was always fighting and yelling with everybody so I just left."

"Yeah, I seen him over at Joe's partying all the time."

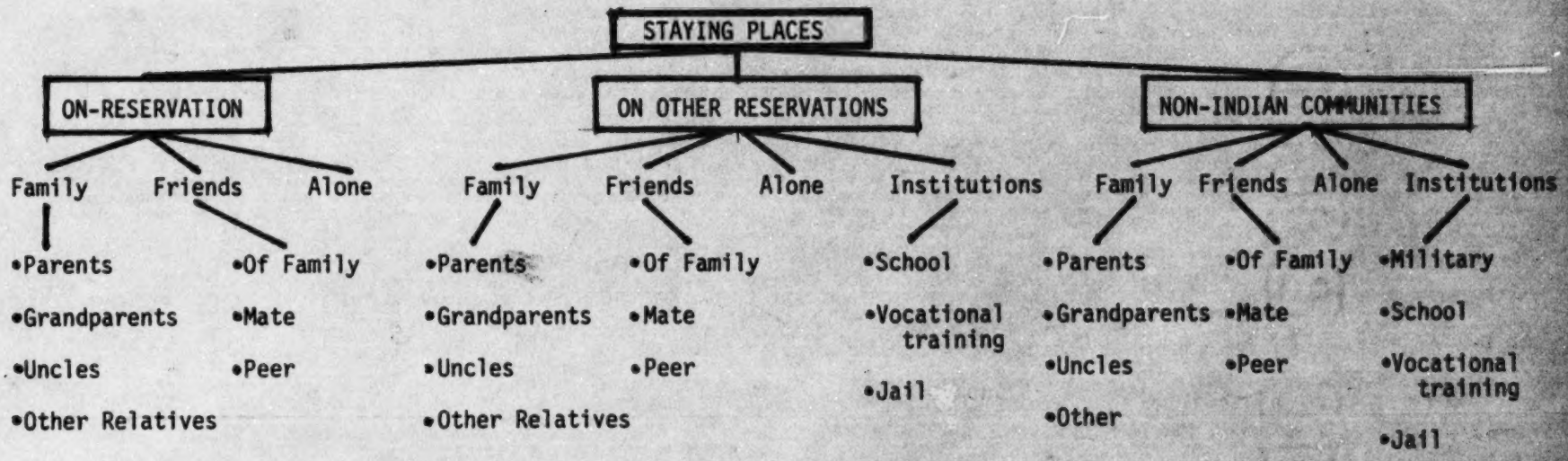
I suddenly realized the question about "home" was alien to these youth. It became apparent that someone's home was not always the individual's current place of residence, or staying place. Using the term home put some individuals in an uncomfortable position of having to explain where they were residing, why, and how permanent this stay might be--information they were not ready to offer to an Anglo 'stranger' they had just met.

Several days later, however, before anyone but Charley had arrived, I asked the question: "Hey Charlie, where are you staying?"

"Oh, right over there, " he responded, "At my Uncle's house."

I had begun to develop a taxonomy of residential places, from now own to be called "staying places", which are exploited by Yavapai youth. These are indicated in Figure 7. The three major classifications of staying places are on-reservation, on some other reservation, or in a non-Indian community. Within each of these categories, each individual has a wide range of options of "staying places", which he may or may not choose to exercise. These options include family and friends, which

FIGURE 7: STAYING PLACE TAXONOMY OF YAVAPAI YOUTH



SOURCE: Winchell(1980)

form part of an associational network which could be best described as a tribal cultural system. Within this system individuals can exhibit considerable spatial mobility while maintaining a cultural and community sense of stability. Only those who live "alone" in any of the categories, or in institutions, are removed from this tribal community. Those who do leave are generally welcomed back at any time, particularly if they have been gone long enough for friends and relatives to forget previous conflicts.

At Fort McDowell, those individuals who had been asked to leave all of their relatives and friends homes were forced to live "up above", sleeping in the open, living off wild game or food gained during travels through the community. Out of 22 subjects from the community, three had lived up above for short periods of time, while only one had lived in either the other reservation or non-Indian communities alone. Over one half had spent time in institutions off the reservation, including jails. Generally, the more of these alternatives individuals had utilized, the more they also utilized different "staying places" within the reservation or tribal community structure.

Not only is the perception of "staying place" entirely different from the Anglo concept of home, but the motivation behind movement is also different. In traditional Yavapai culture, parents were discouraged from disciplining their own children. Instead, the child would be sent to live with an uncle, who could discipline the individual. Several moves of this type were identified for the subject group.

In addition, institutional settings are perceived as offering "staying places", and boarding schools, college, vocational training, and even jail on one occasion, were used as staying places rather than

stages in career development or punishment. One individual young person, for example, completed high school and went away to college in a pre-law program funded by a government agency. He did well, but financial and family restraints forced him to leave school. An auto mechanic training program opened several months later which provided more financial support, and could be completed while the individual was staying with his family. Upon completeion, a scholarship in the pre-law program was again accepted, followed by a heavy equipment operator training, followed by more college. To us it would seem this student was not interested in a law degree. He was, but he was also interested in exploiting "staying places" which seemed interesting at the time.

These brief examples indicate the types of information which can be gained through ethnographic analysis. Most important is that the members of the group, in this case, Yavapai youth, are the expeprts in community and spatial awareness, although in some cases they are not aware of the complex interactions that guide their actions. The purpose of the ethnographic description, as well as humanistic geography, is to gain an understanding of the world as they understand it, in its subjective context.

Cultural Themes in the Social Space of Yavapai Youth

Conclusions in an ethnographic description relate the observations and terminology structures recorded in the data gathering process to different levels of interpretation, ranging from the particular observed situation or interview to an understanding of activity within the community or culture being studied. Spradley suggests six levels of interpretation, shown in Figure 8. In terms of Yavapai social space, specific incident statements such as "where are you staying" and activities on the basketball court demonstrate the meanings and use of spatial information and interaction within the community. The cultural domain and scenes at the basketball court and in the staying places provide a unique insight into the operation and functional meanings attributed to spatial behavior of Yavapai youth. Comparisons with Anglo culture indicates significant differences in perception, meanings, and exchanges of spatial information within Yavapai culture compared with Anglo culture. Finally, this shared information, particularly spatial information, plays an important role in the cultural identity of tribal society, and may provide insight into the theory of ethnicity, cultural identity, and the role of spatial information in such processes.

Ethnographic description provides a unique methodological and philosophical framework for humanistic geography. It addresses the critical issues facing humanistic geography, and offers an opportunity for geographers to participate in a wider range of social science research activities. Particularly when done in conjunction with other methodologies, it presents new and important insights into our understanding of spatial activity within lifeworld situations.

FIGURE 8: LEVELS OF CULTURAL THEMES

1. Specific Incident Statements
2. Specific Statements about a Cultural Domain
3. General Statements about a Specific Cultural Scene
4. General Statements about a Society of Cultural Group
5. Cross-Cultural Descriptive Statements
6. Universal Statements

Source: Spradley, James P., The Ethnographic Interview, 1979, 106-210.

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